



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders

[Developmental and behavioral disorders](#) are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may affect day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime.¹ Some developmental and behavioral disorders include:

- [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\)](#)
- [Autism](#)
- [Cerebral Palsy](#)
- [Fragile X](#)
- [Intellectual Disability](#)
- [Learning Disorder](#)
- [Tourette Syndrome](#)

What Do People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders Need to Know about COVID-19?

Know who is at risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Most people with developmental or behavioral disorders are not naturally at higher risk for becoming infected with or having severe illness from novel coronavirus (COVID-19). However, people with developmental or behavioral disorders who have [serious underlying medical conditions](#) may be at risk of serious illness. Some people with developmental or behavioral disorders may have difficulties accessing information, understanding or practicing preventative measures, and communicating symptoms of illness.

Know how to protect yourself and others.

There is currently no specific, Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved treatment for COVID-19, and there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. Treatment is currently supportive. Therefore, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Advice on [preparation for COVID-19](#) and [prevention of exposure to COVID-19](#) is available.

Continue with your routine care.

- Don't stop any medications or change your treatment plan without talking to your healthcare provider.
- Discuss any concerns about your treatment with your healthcare provider.
- Ensure that you are obtaining the tests ordered by your healthcare provider.
- Continue to get your [routine immunizations](#).



- Talk to your healthcare provider, insurer, and pharmacist about creating an emergency supply of prescription medications. Make sure that you have at least 30 days of prescription and over-the-counter medications and [supplies](#) on hand in case you need to stay home for a long time. Ask your healthcare provider if it is possible to obtain a 90-day supply of your prescription medications.
- Make or update [care plans or an emergency notebook](#). They typically include important information about a person's medical conditions, how to manage those conditions, how to contact healthcare providers and therapists, allergies, information on medications (names, dosages, and administration instructions), preferences (food and other), and daily routines and activities. This may help you receive consistent care if your Direct Service Providers or family members are unavailable.

Related: [Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Caregivers, Parents, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders](#)

Know how to manage stress and cope during the pandemic.

It is natural to feel concerned or stressed as more cases of COVID-19 are discovered and our communities take action to slow the spread of disease. Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress.

Ways to cope with stress

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body.**
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#) .
 - [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals](#).
 - [Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep](#).
 - Avoid [alcohol](#) and [drugs](#) .
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Click here for information on how to [take steps to help yourself cope with stress and anxiety](#).

Take care of your mental health.

Anxiety, depression, and other [mental health conditions](#) can be more common in people with some developmental and behavioral disorders. If you are being treated for a mental health condition it is important to continue any therapies or medications.

Look out for these common signs of distress:

- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, confusion, anxiety, or fear
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes

- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Anger or short temper
- Increased use of [alcohol](#), [tobacco](#), or [other drugs](#)

If you experience these feelings or behaviors for several days in a row and are unable to carry out normal responsibilities because of them, call your healthcare provider or use the resources below to get help. If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, anxiety, or thoughts of hurting or killing yourself or others:

- Call 911 if you feel like you want to harm yourself or others.
- Visit the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) [🔗](#) , call 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) [🔗](#) or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224.
- Visit the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) [🔗](#) or call 1-800-273-8255.

During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and cope with stress, and know where to go if you need help.

More Information

[Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs](#)

[People with Disabilities](#)

Page last reviewed: May 27, 2020

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), [Division of Viral Diseases](#)